

PLEASE REVIEW THE TEST ORIENTATION FIRST (as many questions are answered only in the orientation slides and notes). The questions listed here are commonly asked by applicants taking the Engineer/ Operator exam.

Testing Information

1Q. Where can I find the rules of the testing process?

- A. The rules of the testing process can be found on the orientation pdf that was sent to candidates taking the exam. Expanded testing guidelines can be found at <http://www.uniformguidelines.com/> and http://www.siop.org/_Principles/principlesdefault.aspx.

2Q. Why does the rank of Engineer/Operator not have an assessment center portion of the exam?

- A. Chapter 143 of the Texas Local Government Code contains the provisions and rules that govern classified employees, both Fire and Police. Per Chapter 143, the promotional process shall be based on a written exam.

3Q. How many correct answers for each question?

- A. There will be one correct/ best answer for each test question.

4Q: Can we wear earplugs during the exam?

- A: Yes, you can wear earplugs (but **not** headphones that plug into any electronic devices).

Exam Eligibility

5Q. There are some people who signed up for the exam that are not eligible. Are you aware of this?

- A. Classified Testing is aware that individuals who do not meet minimum requirements are able to sign-up for the exam. The City of Houston allows anyone to apply for a position posted on the job postings. The lists that have been sent to HFD are a list of people that have signed-up on NeoGov. There is a thorough and lengthy process that Classified Testing completes, which is currently in motion, to ensure only eligible people are allowed to take the exam. A list of applicants and their points will be sent to the eligible applicants, and ineligible individuals will be notified. If you discover that the problem still persist on the point list please contact Classified Testing again.

Source Material

6Q. Some materials/ books talk about equipment that HFD does not have or use. Will information about this type of equipment be on the exam (for example, tiller trucks)?

A. As we try to build our tests to be as job related as possible, it is very likely that the test will include information about equipment that HFD does not use very often. However, the Houston subject matter experts that we depended on to help pick and validate these source materials still thought it was important enough to include the reading on this equipment for your study. For example, you probably won't see a question about tiller trucks on the HFD E/O exam, but knowing about tiller trucks in general will probably help make you a more informed and knowledgeable firefighter.

7Q. Source materials/ books talk about processes, things, or differences that don't matter much for HFD operations.

A. It's good to know about these things, but keep in mind that Classified Testing will have HFD experts review all questions and tell us which ones are the most job relevant. We are not likely to ask exam questions from source materials about facts that are not used very much by HFD, or aren't critical for safe operations.

8Q. Information in one source material contradicts something from another source material, so how do I know which one is the right one to study?

A. It depends. If one source contradicts an HFD guideline, then the HFD guideline is always the final answer and the bottom line we will use to build the test. If one text book contradicts another, then Classified Testing tries to avoid asking any questions that would require you to decide which source is the correct one. We try not to ask questions about information that is contradicted from source to source or questions that contradict HFD practices or guidelines. If you have concerns about a specific contradiction or spot two HFD guidelines that contradict one another, please notify a member of Classified Testing so that we can investigate the contradiction and avoid making exam questions that might have multiple correct answers before the test is administered.

9Q. Do the Guidelines overrule other texts?

A. Yes.

10Q. Are we responsible for knowing the entire patient care guidelines? We are not all ALS and they have an unfair advantage to BLS applicants on this information.

A. We try to make our exams as job related as possible, so it is most important for you to know the actions that are related to the BLS E/O role...but it is also important for you to know the actions that are related to the Paramedic role as well. It is more important that you have just a very general understanding of what Paramedics do, so that you can have some ideas about where to find those Fire Fighters if you need them. Any of the materials that are listed on the Source Announcement are all testable items. The questions on the exam will be applicable to the rank of Engineer/Operator. During the item review conducted before the exam is given, subject matter experts from HFD will help clarify which questions are considered current and relevant information.

11Q. Some of the guidelines are out of date. Are we still required to know this information? (Example: 4 inch hose and 5 inch hose; portable radios, etc.)

A. Yes. The guidelines you received are the *most current* guidelines approved by the Houston Fire Department. Although there may be changes happening out in the field, the official guideline remains the same and you are responsible for the content. You can refer to the date of the guideline on the Source Announcement to ensure you are studying the guideline information that could appear on the exam. If a specific item within a question per the guideline is not appropriate for the exam, Classified Testing depends on the Subject Matter Experts to guide us not to use that question. The questions on the exam will be applicable to the rank of Engineer/Operator. During the item review conducted before the exam is given, subject matter experts from HFD will help clarify which questions are considered current and relevant information. We will pass this information along to ensure the SMEs and test writers are aware of this situation.

12Q. How about formulas, equations, tables, figures, case studies, and stories in the source materials? Do we need to study or memorize these and will they be on the exam?

A. You do NOT need to memorize numbers or details from formulas, tables, figures, case studies, and stories. However, you do need to study these things and understand the concepts they are illustrating. For example, the exam will NOT ask you to recall what John Doe did or thought during his story about getting entangled by his own SCBA straps in the dark at a fire scene. But the exam may ask you to identify one entanglement threat related to using an SCBA at a fire scene. A good rule of thumb is to think about how the information in a formula, figure, table, or story relates to one of the E/O knowledge domains listed in the study aid we provided. That is the same way we think about writing exam questions.

13Q. There are some Guidelines with forms and attachments; do we need to know them?

A. Mostly you need to be familiar with the fact that there is a form and what you need it to do. You do not need to memorize a form, as you would never have to remember what is on a form in order to do your job. Attachments are only important to know if they convey information that is important to helping you do one of the tasks on the study aide, as we won't ask questions about materials that don't help you do or learn how to do one of these tasks.

14Q. What about when a source material has an opinion or case studies in the reading material?

A. Again, remember the test is a job knowledge test and is focused on using the facts. A source may have a different opinion, but the facts and how to use those facts to make decisions on the job are the important parts of each source. We are more likely to ask you something along the lines of "which of the following is a potential pro to doing both horizontal and vertical ventilation in X situation?" Case studies are examples of the content the author is conveying throughout the chapter.

15Q. Why use a book (or any other book) when it doesn't seem job relevant?

A. The book review committee, made up of firefighters currently in this position or supervising this position, picked each source because that source offered the best information available on learning to do the most critical tasks for this job. Sometimes, it is just the best source available at this time, even if it isn't perfect. If a source doesn't seem very job relevant to you then we recommend you consult with current E/Os to find out how the information in that source might help to do one of the critical tasks.

16Q: Some Knowledge Domains on the Study Guide pertain to specific guidelines. How do the books contain information about HFD specific guidelines?

A: Somewhere in those materials the experts found something that contributes to your ability to follow those guidelines. This could be information about a topic (like infectious disease) that is related to that guideline, or it could be information supporting your ability to do the action part of that guideline (like clean the apparatus/ ambulance or do better patient care).

17Q: Do we need to know guidelines that concern higher ranks than Captain?

A: Yes, but not as much as that which is directed at E/O rank. During job analysis, we found it was important for E/O to be able to ride up as a Captain on the first day on the job, and that it was important for an E/O to know what the other ranks were generally responsible for doing. However, the test will be as job related as possible, so it is most important to know the guidelines as they pertain to an E/O well, know the Captain well enough to ride up as one, and the other ranks well enough to know where they will be on scene in relation to you.

18Q: For exams in the past, the study guide included a percentage of questions that would come from each source. Why isn't that information included on this study aid?

A: Classified Testing is always moving forward to improve the testing process for the members taking the exam. The percentage per source material initially assisted the test candidates on how and where to focus their study time. Over time, percentages per source material did not match the complexity of the process to allow a fair representation of the percentages per source material. Thus, it has been removed at this time.

19Q. If the test is more based on job knowledge now, how fair will it be for applicants who have not had a chance to ride-up as an E/O or observe the E/O job as often or is a para-medical?

A. Not everyone has had equal experience or even equal opportunities for experience, since some folks have been with the fire department longer than others. This is why we try to explicitly limit and state what job knowledge the test will cover well in advance of the test—so that everyone at least has an equal chance to review and study the content on the test. Everyone has the same opportunity to study the test materials and the same time and opportunity to get guidance from current E/O on the specific source materials and how they are used on the job.

20Q. Are all of the 100 questions on the exam going to come from the knowledge domains listed on the study aide?

A. Yes. Those knowledge domains coupled with a task list help us write questions that are as job relevant as we can make them, so we stick to those most important knowledge domains and tasks.

21Q. Are the item/ question reviewers HFD?

A. Yes. Currently serving in the role or at least have served the role and supervised it (e.g. HFD E/O, HFD Captain, etc.).

22Q: Are questions going to be verbatim?

A: Yes and No. Remember, the test is conceptual and based on using and putting together important facts at the same level of thinking you would do on the job as an E/O. The important thing is to be able to put together sets of facts from a source material to answer a question.

23Q. Any extra study tips not mentioned in the orientation?

A. The SQ3R works well for many students (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SQ3R>). Research on learning also shows that study in small, frequent chunks (like 45 minutes six to eight times a day) over a longer period (like 90 days) leads to more knowledge retention and higher test scores for most adults. It turns out good sleep is also really important for allowing your brain to clean out the mental junk and solidify everything you studied. Getting 8 hours of sleep on average at the same time each day (like 10pm to 6am) accelerates learning rates.

Seniority Points

24Q. Are points (seniority, etc.) calculated up until the test date?

A. Yes, we use the test date as the end day to earn points for that test. However, we aim to have all points calculated and verified before the test date.

25Q. How are the points calculated?

A. From hire date (first day on the HFD payroll as a firefighter trainee) to the test date.

26Q: Are seniority points based on date of hire?

A: Yes, points are based on your first day on the HFD payroll as a firefighter trainee.

27Q. What do I do if my points are wrong?

A. Email or phone Brian.Ingram@houstontx.gov (832-393-6143) and tell him what is wrong so that we can investigate and fix the information prior to the test. Emailing is preferred.

Appeals Time Frame

28Q. What are the dates for the appeals?

A. The appeals will be from 10/12/2018 – 10/18/2018.

29Q. If a couple questions are tossed out how does that change the test scores and rankings on the eligibility list?

A. If the CSC decides to omit a question entirely or add acceptable answers to a question, then Classified Testing rescues every applicant's exam and recalculates the raw and total exam scores (out to the third decimal point). The TLGC 143 requires us to use a 100 point scale even if there are fewer than 100 questions, so if an exam question gets omitted or dropped from the exam then we calculate the scores to be what percentage of the remaining 99 questions each applicant got correct. Usually rescoring a test results in less than a 1 point difference for any 1 to 2 questions removed, and rankings do not change unless the difference between two places or people is less than one seniority point.

30Q. How is the test ranked?

The test or eligibility list is ranked first by your total score, which consists of your raw test score on a 100 point scale plus your seniority points. If the total score is tied, then we use just the raw test score next. If the score is still tied, then we use your total number of days with HFD. If your total number of days with HFD is still tied, then we use your score on the first 25 items of the test, then on the second 25 items of the test and so forth. If the tie goes beyond this, then we would go by alphabetical order of last names. The way we rank test scores is determined by current Civil Service Rules (Classified Testing cannot change this ranking system solely on our own).

31Q. Is there strength in numbers when it comes to appeals? If 80 applicants appeal 1 question does that mean the CSC is more likely to change it?

A. No, there is no strength in numbers on appeals. The CSC place more importance on the logic or argument of an appeal. If a test question is bad or wrong, then it seems more important to explain why and how the test question is wrong, and what information supports your argument (for example, referencing an HFD guideline where the right answer can be found is usually most helpful).

32Q. If a test question or the answer to that question is contradictory in the study material, is this grounds for an appeal?

A. Yes. This is exactly what appeals were meant for—to help eliminate unfair questions from the exam entirely or to provide dual credit for answers that are equally supported in the material the question is derived from.

33Q. After the test, I cannot find the answer to a question in the material that was cited for that question on the test, is this grounds for an appeal?

A. Maybe. Just remember that the question and the answer do not have to be verbatim from the material—the questions just have to be about or using factual knowledge from the material. If the facts that lead to that answer or support that answer are not deducible from the material cited on the exam, then yes, there is probably a mistake in the answer key or the way the question was written that should be appealed.